

Montana Transportation Commission

October 29, 2004 meeting

MDT Headquarters~ Helena, Montana

In attendance:

Shiell Anderson, Transportation Commission Chair
Nancy Espy, Transportation Commission Vice Chair
Kevin Howlett, Transportation Commissioner
Meredith Reiter, Transportation Commissioner
Dan Rice, Transportation Commissioner
Dave Galt, Director –Montana Department of
Transportation (MDT)
Jim Currie, MDT Deputy Director
Ted Burch, Federal Highway Administration
Sandra Straehl, MDT Rail, Transit & Planning
Administrator

Joel Marshik, MDT Chief Engineer
Jim Walther, MDT Operations Engineer
Loran Frazier, MDT Acting Chief Engineer
Dwane Kailey, MDT Acting Missoula District
Administrator
Ray Mengel, MDT Glendive District Administrator
Nick Rotering, MDT Staff Attorney
Gary Larson, Project Analysis Bureau Chief
Mary Gale Padmos, Civil Engineer Specialist
Larry Flynn, Financial Management Bureau Chief
Cary Hegreberg, Montana Contractors Association

Please note: the complete recorded minutes are available for review on the commission's website at http://www.mdt.state.mt.us/trans_comm/. You may request a compact disc (containing the audio files, agenda, and minutes) from the transportation secretary at (406) 444-7200 or ldemont@state.mt.us. Alternative accessible formats of this document will be provided upon request. For additional information, please call (406) 444-7200. The TTY number is (406) 444-7696 or 1-800-335-7592.

Chairman Anderson called the meeting to order at 8:35 am.

Deputy Director Currie stated he had received a letter from Mr. Chris Linkenhoker from Bitterroot Beanery in Hamilton, asking the letter to be read into the record or discussed. Mr. Linkenhoker asked MDT not do construction along US 93 south of Missoula from May 1 through Labor Day. Chairman Anderson noted we received his letter.

Agenda item 1: Tentative Construction Plan

Deputy Director Currie explained the background of the process for the one member of the public attending the meeting. Every year the department goes through the “red book” process, the long-range tentative construction program (TCP). During this process, we look at the current year plus the three years following, which are already in the plan and update deliverability and priorities. We always add a fifth year to the plan and add projects into the plan. The current plan covers current fiscal year 2005 through fiscal year 2009.

This year the commission was included for the second year in the TCP. Typically, the department has done this without commission involvement. One of the things we do prior to the red book process is we meet with the Transportation Commission, about a month a head of time, to have high level of strategic talks. This meeting was held in Missoula on October 14.

One of the items addressed at this meeting was Federal Obligation Limitations (FOL). This was difficult because we don't have a federal highway bill and don't know where we are going to end up regarding obligation limitation. This is the first time we've made a recommendation to the commission as to what we felt the obligation was going to be and build it in. The same goes for 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009.

The commission directed the department to take action on numerous items:

- to increase the Urban Program funding by \$4.1 million
- to set aside funding starting in 2009 for bridges – particularly steel bridges. Two Medicine Bridge was named for specific funding.
- to build at least one rest area per year starting in 2007

Finally, the commission also dealt with funding distributions between districts based on the P3 asset management system. That applies to interstate maintenance and national highway.

Currie explained that every year by law, the department has to update the funding plan, and get commission approval for use of federal highway dollars. Sometimes the final dollar amounts from FHWA are not available until well into the federal fiscal year, sometimes six months into the fiscal year. By the time we bring approval to the commission, it was basically a rubber-stamping event. The plan was already implemented for a good part of the year. This was an issue with the commission and one of the reasons we started including the commission in the red book process. Being involved up front allows them to put their stamp of approval on the TCP.

Another reason the department decided to involve the commission in the TCP was the constraint of district funding. Sometimes constraining the funds required the department to transfer funds within districts between funding categories, allow districts to go into the negative or move funds from one district to another. The department isn't comfortable transferring funds and wasn't clear if they had the authority to transfer money and thought it was the job of the commission.

Last year the commission only acted on Interstate Maintenance, National Highway System, STP Primary and STP Secondary. This year the commission was involved in all of the planning.

After explaining the red book process, Currie asked Chairman Anderson if he might make a recommendation to the commission. Chairman Anderson agreed. Currie stated the staff recommends the commission adopt the TCP as a whole as presented with the requirement that the department manage the program within the (FOL) set in the October 14, 2004 meeting in Missoula.

Staff further recommends that if the FOL change due to congressional action, the department seeks further guidance and potential adjustments to the FOL from the commission.

Commissioner Howlett motioned to adopt all staff recommendations as present by Deputy Director Currie. All five commissioners voted aye.

The meeting adjourned at 9:35 am.

Shiell Chairman Anderson, Chairman
Montana Transportation Commission

David A. Galt, Director
James D. Currie, Deputy Director on behalf of David Galt
Montana Department of Transportation

Lorelle Demont, Secretary
Angie Gifford on behalf of Lorelle Demont
Montana Transportation Commission